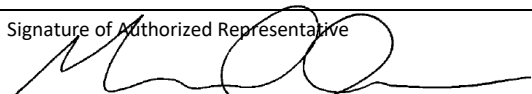


BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

For Fiscal Year 2022

Primary Applicant (Name and Address): Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC 417 Pine Street Green Bay, WI 54301 (920) 940-0138	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions. Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: March 17, 2022 at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. Late applications will not be accepted.	
	Contact for further information: PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov	
	Date: March 17, 2022	
<p>The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.</p>		
<p>Applicant Certification: In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.</p>		
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print) Mitchel Olson	Title Chief Development Officer General Counsel	Phone () 920.940.0138
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date March 17, 2022	

SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar) \$3,000,000
Federal Employer Identification No. 20-0284635	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar) \$3,000,000
Contact Name and Title Mitchel Olson – Chief Development Officer General Counsel	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar) \$6,000,000
Telephone Number 920.940.0138	Project Name B.E.S.T. Program - Leathercamp
E-mail Address(es) mitchel.olson@bugtusselwireless.com	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.) FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant N/A	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other) Last-mile
Grant Manager Contact Name N/A	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number N/A
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations Marathon County 500 Forest Street Wausau, WI 54403	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences) The B.E.S.T. Program - Leathercamp Project is the deployment of 90.7 miles of fiberoptic last-mile, providing complete coverage in the project area. This project is “Open Access” allows for future expansion and encourages faster deployment of countywide fiber to the premise, which supports immediate economic opportunity for residents and businesses.	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed 1 Gbps`	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed 1 Gbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location 200 mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location 200 mbps

County or Counties served by this project Marathon County	Community or Communities served by this project Town of Knowlton, Village of Kronenwetter, Town of Guenther
List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve Frontier Communications, TDS, AirRunner Networks, Cirrinity, Country Wireless, NetworkProfessionalsInc, NSight, USCellular	
Does proposed project serve an <i>unserved</i> area of the State, as defined in Section 1.4 of the application instruction? (yes/no) Yes	Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no) Yes
For last mile projects or components the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access). 16	For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access). 636
Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <i>unserved</i> ? 15	Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i> ? 637
For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no) Yes	Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no) Yes
Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no) Yes	Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no) Yes
Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2021? (yes/no) Yes	

FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application

Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

Grant Summary

Grant Applicant:	Project:
Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	B.E.S.T. Program - Leathercamp

Budget

Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 2,098,997.00	\$ 2,098,997.00	\$ 4,197,994.00
2	Equipment	\$ 130,400.00	\$ 130,400.00	\$ 260,800.00
3	Supplies	\$ 594,191.50	\$ 594,191.50	\$ 1,188,383.00
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$ 119,724.00	\$ 119,724.00	\$ 239,448.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees	\$ 56,687.50	\$ 56,687.50	\$ 113,375.00
6	Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
7	Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total:		\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 6,000,000.00
				50.0% match requested

Pledged Contributions

#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Marathon County Loan to Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC	Applicant	Cash	\$ 2,857,825.00
2	Marathon County	Partner	Cash	\$ 142,175.00
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 3,000,000.00

FIGURE 1. PROPOSED FIBER ROUTE

- Middle-Mile Fiber
-
- PSC — Underserved

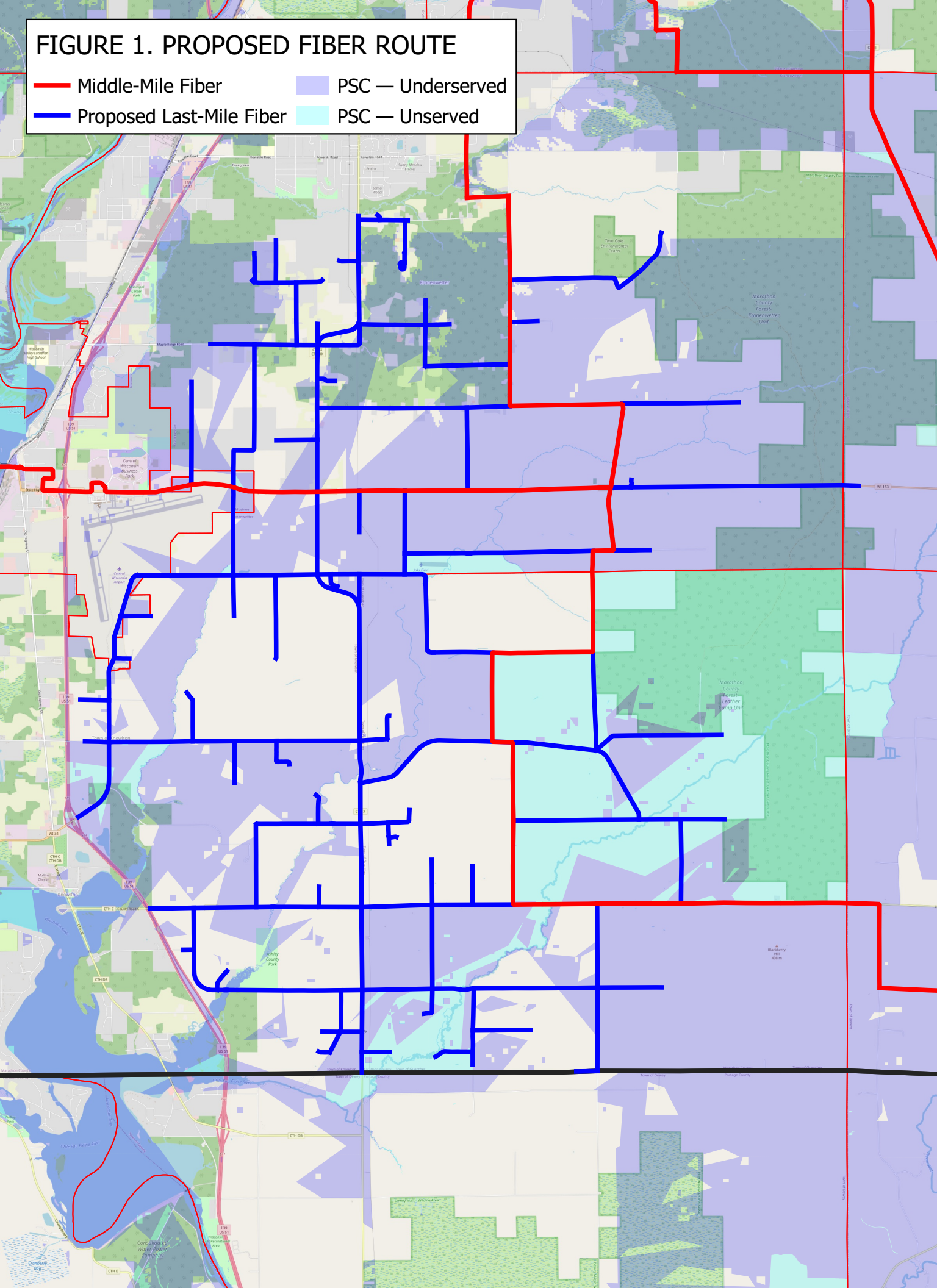
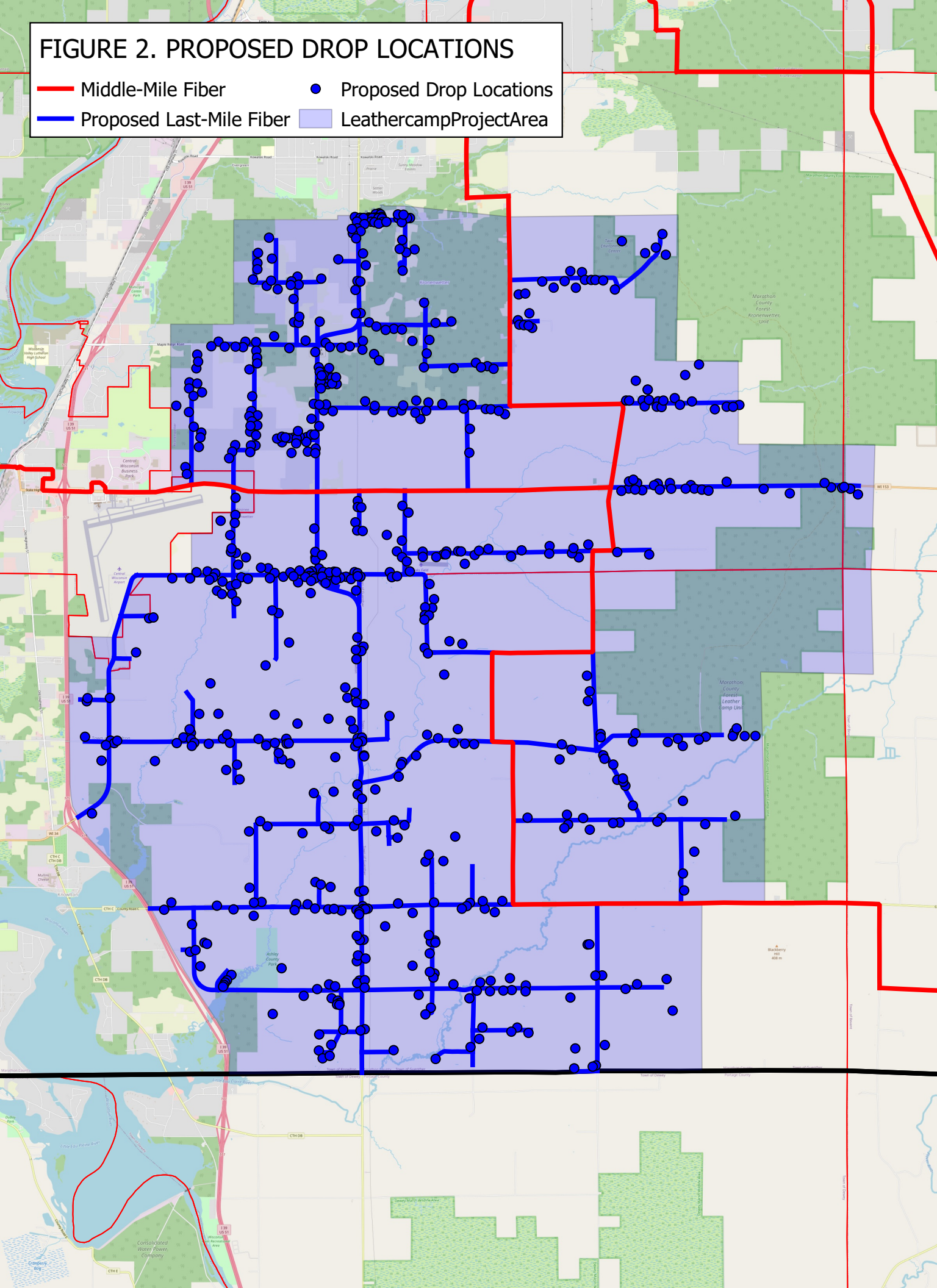
 Proposed Last-Mile Fiber

FIGURE 2. PROPOSED DROP LOCATIONS

- Middle-Mile Fiber
- Proposed Last-Mile Fiber
- Proposed Drop Locations
- LeathercampProjectArea



3.2 Mandatory application requirements

3.2.1 Applicant identification and contact information

a. The name and address of the entity applying for the grant, and the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of one or more contact persons representing the applicant.

Name of Entity: Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC ("Bug Tussel")
Mailing Address: 417 Pine Street
Green Bay, WI 54701

Contact: Mitchel Olson
Title: Chief Development Officer | General Counsel
Phone: 920.940.0138
Email: mitchel.olson@bugtusselwireless.com

b. If the application proposes a public-private partnership, the identity and contact information for all application partners.

Name of Entity: Marathon County
Mailing Address: 500 Forest Street
Wausau, WI 54403

Contact: Mr. John Robinson
Title: County Supervisor / Broadband Task Force Chair
Phone: 715.212.2227
Email: john.robinson@co.marathon.wi.us

c. The application must show that the applicant is an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1).

Hilbert Communications, LLC, and its subsidiary, Bug Tussel Wireless, LLC, are Wisconsin Limited Liability Companies, with their headquarters located at 417 Pine Street, Green Bay, WI 54701, and are Eligible applicants, as defined by §196.504(1)(ac)(1).

3.2.2 Description of the project

a. A static map and description of the area of the State that will be affected by the proposed project.

Please see the enclosed project maps, located on pages 5 and 6. The enclosed maps show complete coverage throughout the project area

b. If the project area lies within a census block designated as served on the PSC Broadband Map, provide additional documentation to demonstrate the actual broadband service that is available in the proposed project area.

As shown in **Figures 1 and 2** above, there is a significant need for expanded broadband access in the Town of Knowlton, Village of Kronenwetter, and Town of Guenther. Despite its proximity to Wausau, the project area remains largely underserved and unserved, as identified in the PSC maps.

c. An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access. Include information about the:

This project will increase broadband access by making last-mile fiber to the premises connections.

This project will have the capacity to service the 636 households located along the fiber route, in addition to the 16 business. All of the possible connections lack a sufficient level of broadband options, specifically lacking a FTTP option.

The fiber to the premises packages available will include a symmetrical 200 mbps download / 200 mbps upload option for \$64.99, in addition to a 1 Gbps download / 1 Gbps upload option for \$99.99.

d. A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the “last mile,” “middle mile,” or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.

The proposed project will consist of last-mile assets.

e. A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.

The network will consist of fiber optic cable connected to GPON/ONT electronics that will provide capacity for over 1 Gbps to each residence and business along the fiber route along with Dense Wave Division Multiplexing (DWDM) equipment for traffic aggregation, capable of supporting 200 to 800 Gbps.

f. A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.

Final route design, in conjunction with Bug Tussel’s partners, and engineering will commence immediately following the announcement of the grant award. This process will last through the end of 2022, with construction beginning in early 2023. Construction of the main-line fiber is anticipated to be completed in June, 2023, with last-mile drops and installations beginning shortly thereafter. It is Bug Tussel’s expectation that the project will be completed by June, 2024.

3.2.3 Itemized Budget (all amounts should be rounded to the nearest dollar)

- a. In addition to the Summary of Project Budget that is included as page 3, applicants should include a price list or quote for any equipment the applicant intends to purchase, including capital expenditures. The application should also indicate whether any facilities involved would be owned, rented, or leased.

At this time, Bug Tussel does not intend to purchase any equipment to facilitate construction pursuant to this grant application. All assets installed incident to this project will be owned and operated by Bug Tussel, or a related entity.

- b. The application must show that the grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of a telecommunications provider or the monthly bills of telecommunications customers. For purposes of this grant program, subsidize means a contribution to the operating costs, including profit, of the telecommunications provider.

The sole purpose of the grant contemplated herein is to facilitate the construction of fiber assets. The grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of Bug Tussel, nor will it be used to subsidize the costs paid by customers.

- c. The application must show that the grant funds requested will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas covered by the application. Construction of broadband infrastructure may include any of the following:

Other than the work done in formulation of this grant application, no planning, engineering, permitting, or construction has taken place. All of the costs of this project, as identified on the enclosed budget, will be incurred during the performance period.

3.2.4 Priority factors supporting the application

- a. **Matching funds.** A description of the matching funds the applicant will invest in the proposed project, if any. For each element, indicate the type of match (cash, salary expense, or in-kind contribution). If the application is submitted by a partnership, identify the partner responsible for providing each element of the proposed matching funds. *Note: The requirement for this information is satisfied via inclusion of the completed Funding Statement as page 4 of the application.*

As discussed in Section b below, through the Broadband Expansions Serving Townships (B.E.S.T.) Program, and additional funding sources, Bug Tussel and its partner are pledging a total of \$3,000,000, or 50% of the total project cost.

- b. **Public-private partnerships.** If the public-private partnership is memorialized in a joint venture agreement or other writing, provide a copy of that agreement. If the partnership has not been reduced to a written agreement, provide a short description of the management role, financial commitment, or other contribution to the project for each participating partner.

As part of the B.E.S.T. Program, Bug Tussel is partnering with Marathon County to bring broadband access to the project area. Bug Tussel will own and operate all assets.

The creation of the public private partnership between Bug Tussel and Marthon County is memorialized by Resolution #R-21-22 (attached as **Exhibit A**).

c. Existing broadband service. A list of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:

The design of the project contemplated herein has given significant priority to areas avoided by existing internet service providers.

As shown on Table 1 below, several providers have some level of coverage in the project area. This coverage, however, is rarely, if ever, capable of reliably providing broadband service at speeds of 25 mbps download / 3 mbps upload. The services currently offered in the project area do not meet the needs of the residences and businesses in the project area, which is our sole motivator in undertaking this project.

Table 1. Internet Service Providers.

Service Provider	Technology Platform	Price Range	Advertised Download Speeds	Advertised Upload Speeds
Frontier Communications	DSL	Unknown without service address	18 mbps	1.0 mbps
TDS	DSL	Unknown without service address	15 mbps	2.0 mbps
AirRunner Networks	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	30 mbps	6 mbps
Country Wireless	Fixed Wireless	\$74.99/month	25 mbps	5 mbps
Nsight	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	0.7 mpbs	0.4 mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	Unknown without service address	2.0 mbps	.064 mbps

d. Project impact. A description of the geographic area and the population, both in terms of absolute numbers and likely users, which will be served by the proposed project. Indicate the number of anticipated residential and business customers in the project area, if known. Explain the speed and quality of internet service that will be available. Include information about the range of packages available for purchase. Provide details on any low-income access programs and steps the project will take to support adoption.

This project will have a profound impact on broadband access in the Town of Knowlton, Village of Kronenwetter, and Town of Guenther. Of the 652 homes and businesses that will be able to immediately take service, all are in areas where broadband access is severely lacking, both in terms of access and affordability.

This expanded access will enable improvements in the lives of the residents of Town of Knowlton, Village of Kronenwetter, and Town of Guenther by enabling remote work opportunities, improving access to educational opportunities, and enhancing access to medical services and information.

e. Scalability. A description of how the proposed project could expand or improve the broadband service it delivers, while maintaining the quality of its broadband service. This description should include specific projected increases in the following parameters that are known at the time of the application:

Bug Tussel is undertaking a significant fiber-optic build out across Wisconsin, with proposed projects in more than 45 of the 72 counties. When completed, this will create a statewide, rural focused fiber optic network with as many as 60 redundancies between the end user and the destination of their data traffic.

For too long, networks have been designed on an ad hoc basis, connecting only those areas with significant enough population to allow for a quick return on investment. This has resulted in unreliable networks that travers through entire communities without making connections to the residents. Bug Tussel has designed networks that focus first on reliability and need, and has found that profitably follows closely when you put the community, and its residents, first.

The project contemplated herein, as part of the statewide network design, will have the capacity to serve the totality of the project area, with the ability to have its boundaries expanded in subsequent phases. This project is a last-mile expansions of a middle-mile that is being installed over the course of 2022. As a complete solution for the project area, this project will accomplish the broadband goals of Marathon County for the project area, allowing future expansion efforts to focus on other areas.

f. Economic development. A description of how the proposed project will promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region. This description may be supplemented with a letter from one or more persons discussing the potential economic impact the project could have for that individual or business. In scoring this element, the following factors will be taken into account:

County governments, municipalities, commercial organizations, and economic development advocates have all identified the need for expanded broadband to meet current needs, to anticipate future needs, and to promote economic development. The presence of these facilities does not guarantee economic success but the lack of broadband and fiberoptic backbone transport guarantees the likelihood of economic stagnation and a potentially substandard economic development atmosphere.

A 2019 study by the UW-Extension noted that that a 10% increase in Internet speeds at the county level leads to average increased housing values from \$230 to \$661. The study also quantified that as more households reach these increased speed, quantifiable results will be seen in higher township tax revenues.

When considering the effect of “internet coverage” one typically thinks of email and browsing the internet. The economic reality of a robust communications network is critical for the following applications:

- Law enforcement and public safety from local agencies to the FBI/CIA and FEMA.
- Educational purposes in schools and to reduce costs for school districts through online textbooks and lifelong learning processes.

- Agricultural purposes such as irrigation controls, mapping of soil conditions, amount of fertilizer needed per square meter or yard, yield mapping, monitoring cows for milk fever or bloat, asset management, logistics for fuel and commodity delivery.
- Transportation purposes such as trucking logistics and safety, railroad switching and monitoring of bearings to prevent derailments, package tracking, management of delivery routes and many others.
- Home security and automation including childcare oversight, geriatric monitoring, ambient intelligence where personal preferences are automatically implemented in a home or business, security alarms and monitoring, monitoring critical appliances such as freezers and refrigerators, sump pumps, and HVAC controls.
- Medical and health purposes such as blood clot monitoring, oversight of insulin and pain pumps, in home cancer treatments, exercise and diet monitoring, heart monitoring and automatic adjustment of pacemakers and other heart monitors, attention and communication tools for those suffering from autism, cerebral palsy or other communication limiting diseases.
- Remote delivery and transportation systems such as drones and self-driven vehicles.

Improved broadband coverage throughout Town of Knowlton, Village of Kronenwetter, and Town of Guenther will also enhance the many recreational opportunities available to both individuals that live in the project areas and to visitors to Marathon County.

g. Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas. A description of whether the proposed project will or will not impair the ability of a broadband service provider or competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area.

This project provides complete coverage for the project area, but will not impair further development of the adjacent areas. The project area was designed using information provided by neighboring providers, and provides coverage beyond their existing boundaries in underserved and unserved areas.

Bug Tussel's last-mile fiber will allow immediate access to those along the route, and it was designed not with dense population areas as the prime motivator. This will facilitate further development, by Bug Tussel and other competing broadband service providers, by completing the area and reserving capital for future development in adjacent areas.

3.2.5 Other information supporting the application

a. A description of applicant's history or experience constructing broadband communications facilities in the State and elsewhere.

As a growth oriented company with a statewide footprint, Bug Tussel has a long history of undertaking projects of this magnitude.

Through the PSC, Hilbert Communications, and its subsidiaries, have been awarded a number of grants, as shown on Table 2 below. All projects have been completed, or are in the process of being completed, within the parameters outlined in each respective grant application:

Table 2. Grant Awards.

Grant	Year	Technology	Status	Customers
Oneida County - I	2015	Fixed Wireless	Completed	199
Oneida County – II	2017	Fixed Wireless	Completed	256
Florence County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	42
Oneida County – III	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	179
Juneau County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	25
Green County	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	93
Oneida County – IV	2018	Fixed Wireless	Completed	169
LaFayette County	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	24
Green Lake County	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	31
Town of Deerfield	2019	Fixed Wireless	Completed	7
Oneida County – V	2019	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Kewaunee County	2020	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Menominee County	2020	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Forest County	2020	Fixed Wireless / Fiber	Pending	Pending
Green County	2020	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Iowa County	2020	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Florence County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Fond du Lac County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Iron County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Wood County – SW	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Wood County	2021	Fixed Wireless	Pending	Pending
Kewaunee County	2021	Fiber	Pending	Pending
Forest County	2022	Fiber	Pending	Pending

Bug Tussel completed a number of American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Access Grant applications that were not awarded, and four of those projects will commence irrespective of the grant award. Construction on fiber-optic networks in Marathon, Waushara, Calumet, and Fond du Lac Counties will begin this spring.

b. A description of how the proposed project will or will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure.

The project area is one where legacy providers have not continued to make the investments necessary to support modern technological advancement. As discussed above, existing access exists only in areas where profitability facilitated the investment, which leaves large geographic tracts throughout project area with little to no broadband access. This project seeks to serve the underserved and unserved, and does so in areas with insufficient levels of reliable broadband.

c. A description of an applicant's financial ability to undertake the proposed broadband construction project. This may include information such as the number of years the company has been in operation, documentation of successful completion of similar infrastructure projects, evidence that sufficient funds are available to cover project expenditure and match, customer turn-over rates, and credit rating.

Bug Tussel Wireless was founded in 2003, and in 2008 joined forces with McKinley Reserve and Paul Gehl to form Hilbert Communications through a merger of seven companies. With the goal to remedy the dire need for broadband and cellular access of those living in rural communities, Bug Tussel has grown substantially in its nearly 20 year history.

The core investment group has made investments in rural wireless and broadband in excess of \$30 million and is currently completing a series of financing agreements to fund over \$500,000,000 of new capital projects through a number of joint ventures with private equity firms and public bond issuances. Consolidated revenues per Hilbert's most recent audited financial statements is nearly \$65,000,000, a doubling year on year increase.

Bug Tussel has a proven track record of operating, maintaining, and continually investing in its network to provide its thousands of rural customers with the best technologies on the market. Collaborating with partners like AT&T, Bug Tussel currently operates approximately 600 broadband and cellular sites throughout rural Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa. Further, Bug Tussel has a rapidly expanding fiber footprint with existing fiber assets in Forest and Oconto Counties, as well as ongoing projects in Iowa, Green, Kewaunee, Marathon, Forest, Fond du Lac, Calumet, and Waushara Counties all set to be completed in 2022.

Bug Tussel and its subsidiaries can provide turnkey solutions for nearly any rural community. From site acquisition, tower construction, network operations, and sales and service, Bug Tussel can connect rural communities and keep residents competitive with larger urban centers.

Bug Tussel has been very deliberate in its network design creating significant redundancies through the use of "ring design" and a combination of over the air and fiberoptic connectivity resulting in industry high performance standards. This design and reputation resulted in the award of construction and operational contracts with AT&T for a portion of the FirstNet® National Emergency Communications Network. Bug Tussel brings the same reliability and redundancy design to an individual customer in rural Wisconsin as it does to a national emergency communications network.

Bug Tussel also believes that networks need to be sustainable and as such cannot be reliant on future grants or funding but must seek creative ways in rural markets to leverage assets. This application and our entire network leverages assets and relationships to create a superior network. Bug Tussel is in the final stages of a national build agreement with AT&T, with nearly 350 sites completed across Wisconsin and southwestern Iowa that also provides a basis for our broadband network and makes broadband possible on AT&T's network. Since 2018, Bug Tussel has ramped its site acquisition and construction teams from 2 to 4 sites per month to up to 20 sites per month and has completed nearly 200 sites in a single year. These sites met the stringent quality standards of FirstNet and of AT&T. They also met our own stringent quality standards for each rural customer.

d. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.

In a letter of support on behalf of Aspiris, Inc., Wade Carroll, VP Information Technology, highlights the following:

“Adequate broadband coverage is also a necessity for those seeking to better utilize telehealth. Telemedicine is changing the way patients in Marathon County, and throughout the state manage their healthcare needs. The benefits of telehealth can only be utilized with reliable high-speed internet access – yet, many in Marathon County do not have adequate, reliable, or affordable service.”

National studies provide evidence of cost savings with the use of telehealth services. In a pre-COVID-19 study of 40,000 Cigna beneficiaries, the 20,000 beneficiaries who used the MDLive telehealth platform had 17% lower costs when compared with non-virtual care. Virtual care users also experienced a 36% net reduction in ED use per 1,000 people compared to non-virtual care users (Healthcare IT News). The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) Report of the Taskforce on Telehealth Policy discusses a variety of evidence that the use of telehealth services lowers the overall cost of care. We are confident that this national data can be extrapolated to this project area. Considering that in-person health care services are 20 or more miles away for many residents of the project area, use of telehealth also results in savings related to travel and time away from work or school.

e. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.

In her letter of support, D.C. Everest Superintendent Kristine A. Gilmore, Ed. D., stated:

“All levels of our educational system stand to gain from this project as broadband can overcome geographical and financial barriers to provide a wide range of educational and cultural opportunities. For residential internet service, broadband makes it possible for students to attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home - something that many rural students cannot currently do, even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of internet access, including traveling to the public library, a local McDonalds or Starbucks, or friend's house which can take a great deal of time and money. Beyond virtual learning and homework, with quality residential internet service, students can easily access information and learn about their community and the world. They can also learn about secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

There are many online educational programs currently available for students of all ages in the project area. Several school districts have on-line learning labs, where a student can be physically located in their high school but take a class for college credit. While K-12 schools have largely returned to in-person instruction, some families prefer an on-line option. With improved internet access, families in the project area may wish to open-enroll in accredited online schools such as Acellus Academy, Virtual Charter Schools, or the Wisconsin Connections Academy.

Adult professional continuing education has made a major shift to online course delivery, and will be aided by this project. Rural health care providers at all levels, from nursing assistants to sub-specialty physicians, REALTORS, HVAC technicians, accountants, firefighters, childcare providers and others need access to highspeed internet for continuing education to maintain credentials and improve skills.

f. A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:

This project is the result of a true partnership between Bug Tussel and Marathon County. From planning and design forward, Bug Tussel and the Marathon County have been engaged, and will continue to be engaged to complete the shared goal of expanded broadband access throughout the project area.

Moreover, Bug Tussel will continue to partner with Marathon County following the completion of the construction project. Bug Tussel works diligently to level the playing field so that rural areas can utilize the same types of services as urbanized areas and therefore able to fully compete economically and socially to attract and retain residents and businesses. Through its community outreach component, Bug Tussel University, Bug Tussel will work with Marathon County to provide educational seminars ranging from basic classes (“How to use the internet” and “How to use social media”) to more advanced curriculum. Bug Tussel University personnel are always very engaged in the communities in which Bug Tussel operates, seeking user feedback on ways to assist them in connecting technology and the community.

g. Letters and messages in support of the application submitted by prospective customers, local government officials, and other interested persons.

Please see the attached Letters of Support from a schools, businesses, and health care institutions that will benefit from this project, collectively attached as **Exhibit B**.

EXHIBIT LIST

A. Resolution #R-21-22 – Authorization of County Support for Public Service Commission (PSC) Broadband Grant

B. Letters of Support

- a. Aspirus;**
- b. Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce;**
- c. D.C. Everest Area School District;**
- d. Marathon County Farm Bureau;**
- e. Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization;**
- f. ProVision Partners Cooperative;**
- g. Marathon County Sheriff’s Office;**
- h. United Way of Marathon County;**
- i. Wausau School District – Dr. Keith Hilts, Superintendent of Schools; and**
- j. Wausau School District – Jon Euting, Director of Technology.**



March 16, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Dear Public Service Commission of Wisconsin,

Marathon County Government would like to formally announce its support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel project to aid in the economic growth of Marathon County and support the general improvement of our communities through increased broadband capacity.

Broadband expansion is a key component to long-term economic growth for Marathon County. The availability of adequate, reliable, and affordable internet service will inevitably retain and attract both residents and talent, increase employment opportunities, and expand economic activity. Our ability to attract and retain residents is critical in not only maintaining our tax base but growing it. Furthermore, this provides the means for Marathon County to deliver a wide range of services to our residents, including the ability for our local emergency responders to leverage technology, improving the efficiency and access of our 911 system.

This project will also improve our residents' quality of life, allowing them to carry out daily tasks more efficiently, work from home, attend school virtually, and access telehealth services. Expanded broadband access will ultimately revitalize Marathon County and posture it to compete with larger cities for investment and innovation.

The Marathon County/Bug Tussel project provides a unique opportunity for 605 households and businesses in the Towns of Guenther, Knowlton, and the Village of Kronenwetter to access reliable, high-quality fiber broadband service. Marathon County Government fully supports this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal through expedited permitting. **Furthermore, we will support this project with a financial match of \$142,175 if grant funding is awarded.**

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at kurt.gibbs@co.marathon.wi.us or (715) 261-1409. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kurt Gibbs
Chair, Marathon County Board of Supervisors

Marathon County Board of Supervisors

Marathon County Courthouse, 500 Forest St., Wausau WI 54403 | P: 715-261-1500

RESOLUTION #R-21 -22

AUTHORIZATION OF COUNTY SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (PSC) BROADBAND GRANTS

WHEREAS, broadband access is essential for economic development, virtual and lifetime learning, rural prosperity, and telehealth health services in Marathon County; and

WHEREAS, Marathon County has recognized the importance of broadband access in ensuring the health, safety and economic prosperity for all residents; and

WHEREAS, a significant portion of the county is currently "unserved" and "underserved" in terms of access to reliable and adequate broadband services; and

WHEREAS, the County has recognized the need to play a role in enhancing broadband access to its residents based on the findings and work done in association with the 2009 Broadband Gap Analysis, the 2015 Broadband Connectivity Task Force Report, and the 2019 Broadband Assessment and Plan prepared by Design Nine; and

WHEREAS, based on meetings and discussions with Internet Service Providers and evaluating the recommendations of Design Nine the County Board created a Broadband Task Force and charged it with identifying strategies, partners and potential funding sources that will support the expansion of broadband services to underserved areas; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has existing opportunities to expand broadband services through a Broadband Expansion Grant Program administered by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC); and

WHEREAS, to assist PSC grant applicants, the Marathon County Broadband Task Force has recommended a policy of providing forgivable loans to PSC grant applicants whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County. These forgivable loans would be in the amount of \$235 per unit for each applicant. Each loan would be forgiven upon activation of the broadband system within Marathon County created, expanded, or updated by grant funds. These loans would be provided based upon the applications and materials submitted and considered at the Marathon County Broadband Task Force meeting of February 28, 2022; and

WHEREAS, to further assist PSC grant applicants, the Marathon County Broadband Task Force has recommended a policy of making low interest loans available to PSC grant applicants whose expenditures will exceed \$235 per unit and whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County. These loans would be for the non-PSC and non-county share of these projects; and

WHEREAS, these recommended loans would be available to applicants through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, an allowable use of funds pursuant to ARPA expenditure categories 5.16 and 5.17 and Section 602(c)(1)(D) of the Social Security Act as amended.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Human Resources, Finance, and Property Committee and the Marathon County Executive Committee authorize appropriate county officials to act under this resolution to convey County support for and commit County resources to broadband service expansion applications that satisfy the criteria established by the Marathon County Broadband Task Force. County officials are also authorized to work with and support grant applicants through suitable means they have determined to be most advantageous to the interests of Marathon County within the constraints of the Budget approved by the County Board.





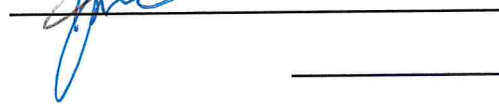
NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Human Resources, Finance, and Property Committee, the Marathon County Executive Committee, and the Marathon County Board authorize county officials to provide forgivable loans in the amount of \$235 per unit to PSC grant applicants whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County and as further defined in the applications and materials submitted and considered at the Marathon County Broadband Task Force meeting of February 28, 2022. The forgivable loan would not exceed \$70,000 for Cirrinity, \$142,175 for Bug Tussel Wireless and \$944,835 for Frontier for a total not to exceed \$1,157,010. The forgivable loans will only be made upon a successful award from the PSC.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Marathon County Human Resources, Finance, and Property Committee, the Marathon County Executive Committee, and the Marathon County Board authorize county officials to make available low interest loans available to PSC grant applicants whose proposed use of grant funds will benefit Marathon County for the non-PSC and non-county share of these projects under the terms and conditions as defined by the Marathon County Broadband Task Force.




NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that these recommended loans are authorized through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, an allowable use of funds pursuant to ARPA expenditure categories 5.16 and 5.17 and Section 602(c)(1)(D) of the Social Security Act as amended.

March 15, 2022

HUMAN RESOURCES, FINANCE AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

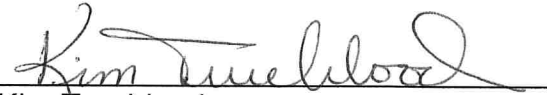
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Fiscal Impact: This resolution would have no immediate fiscal impact; however, it would authorize county officials to utilize American Rescue Plan Act funding to authorize per unit loans to PSC grant applicants whose projects benefit Marathon County. Provisions of loans under this resolution would have an impact on ARPA funds dependent on the number of applicants and the amounts approved.

STATE OF WISCONSIN)
)SS.
COUNTY OF MARATHON)

I, Kim Trueblood, County Clerk in and for Marathon County, Wisconsin, hereby certify that the attached Resolution #R-21-22 was enacted by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors at the Adjourned Annual Meeting which was held on March 15, 2022.

S E A L



Kim Trueblood
Marathon County Clerk



2200 Westwood Drive, PO Box 1395, Wausau, WI 54401
715.847.2118 | 800.283.2881 | aspirus.org

March 7, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel Project

Ms. Nieto,

On behalf of Aspirus Inc., I write today to express support for the proposed Marathon County/Bug Tussel Project.

The health of our community can be greatly increased with improved internet service. Through the internet, patients are able to have greater access to their health information and increased convenience in gaining the health supplies that they need. For example, patients can go online to view their health records, order prescriptions, and view their insurance policies. Patients are also able to research tips for a healthy lifestyle and access exercise classes – these are all part of preventative care.

Adequate broadband internet is also a necessity for those seeking to better utilize telehealth. Telemedicine is changing the way patients in Marathon County, and throughout the state manage their healthcare needs. The benefits of telehealth can only be utilized with reliable high-speed internet access – yet, many in Marathon County do not have adequate, reliable, or affordable service.

As we continue to rely heavily on telemedicine to support the evolving needs of patients, expanding broadband connectivity will help to ensure Aspirus Inc. can continue operating in an effective manner. If patients do not have quality internet service, they are not able to access their health information, receive tele-health services, or stay up-to-date on events and other happenings. Because of this, it is imperative that all Marathon County residents have fast, reliable, and affordable residential internet service. This is why we offer our strong support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel Project.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-847-2537 or at wade.carroll@aspirus.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wade Carroll
VP, Information Technology
Aspirus Inc.



March 5, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Marathon County/ Bug Tussel Wireless Project

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Marathon County/ Bug Tussel Wireless project.

There are many benefits of having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in our community related to quality of life and economic vitality. While the list of benefits is quite lengthy, I have highlighted a few key reasons why this expanded access is critical to the rural areas of Marathon County below.

First, the health of the community can be greatly increased with improved internet service. Through the internet, patients can have greater access to their health information and increased convenience in gaining prescriptions and supplies that they need. Additionally, telehealth is becoming a method of gaining healthcare and is a fantastic resource where traveling to appointments may be difficult. However, telehealth requires significant bandwidth, low latency, and symmetrical download and upload speeds.

Second, quality internet service can also have widespread impacts on our educational system. Reliable broadband makes it possible for students to attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home - something many students in Marathon County cannot currently do. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of accessing reliable internet service, which can take a great deal of time, money, and health exposure. Beyond virtual learning and homework, students with quality residential internet service would be able to access information and learn about their community and the world, secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

Third, as we continue to experience an ongoing workforce shortage, businesses have put a high emphasis on worker retention and development. Quality internet service provides existing employees with the ability to work remotely and access quality professional development opportunities. As we fill positions, we find that individuals are often drawn to the scenic beauty and rural setting of Marathon County. Unfortunately, we lose talent as prospective employees find that housing options are limited to where high speed internet infrastructure is located.



The Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless project is a unique opportunity for some of the more rural areas of Marathon County to have access to high quality, reliable internet service. As you have read above, the impact is extensive, touching nearly every industry in Marathon County in some manner. With this project, residents would have access to tele-health services, students can attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home, businesses can provide their employees with the added flexibility of working remotely, and the list continues.

As the President and CEO of the Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce, I fully support this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-848-5946 or at deckmann@wausauchamber.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Eckmann", is written over the printed name.

David Eckmann

President and CEO

Greater Wausau Chamber of Commerce



D.C. Everest Area School District

1699 Schofield Ave., Suite 300
Schofield, WI 54476
Phone 715-359-4221
www.dce.k12.wi.us

Kristine A. Gilmore, Ed.D.
Superintendent

MISSION STATEMENT

D.C. Everest Area School District, in partnership with the community, is committed to being an innovative educational leader in developing knowledgeable, productive, caring, creative, responsible individuals prepared to meet the challenges of an ever-changing global society.

March 7, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Marathon County Bug Tussel Wireless Project

Dear Public Service Commission of Wisconsin,

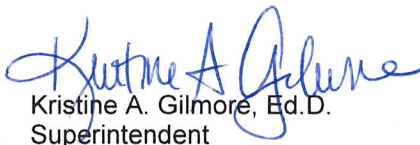
The D.C. Everest Area School District would like to formally announce its support for the "Marathon County bug Tussel Wireless" project to increase District students' ability to access educational resources, learn successfully remotely, and support the general improvement of the community through increased broadband capacity.

All levels of our educational system stand to gain from this project as broadband can overcome geographical and financial barriers to provide a wide range of educational and cultural opportunities. For residential internet service, broadband makes it possible for students to attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home – something that many rural students cannot currently do, even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of internet access, including traveling to the public library, a local McDonalds or Starbucks, or friend's house which can take a great deal of time and money. Beyond virtual learning and homework, with quality residential internet service, students can easily access information and learn about their community and the world. They can also learn about secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

The Marathon County Bug Tussel Wireless Project provides a unique opportunity for households in rural Marathon County to access reliable, high quality, fiber broadband service. With this project, District students would have access to consistent high-speed internet service that would enable them to easily participate in synchronous education, attend large webinars, or take online classes even when siblings and other household members are also accessing the internet.

As the D.C. Everest Area School District, we fully support this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the District at 715-359-4221.

Thank you for your consideration,



Kristine A. Gilmore, Ed.D.
Superintendent

KG:es

March 09, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless Project

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Marathon County **Bug Tussel Wireless** Project. Agriculture's success and growth is dependent on reliable and affordable high speed internet service, as it allows farmers to follow commodity markets, communicate with customers and reach markets across the world. Additionally, precision agriculture, which can help reduce costs and increase efficiencies relies on the availability of broadband service and agricultural tourism, a growing market, relies on a strong digital presence.

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation is the state's largest general farm organization representing farms of different sizes, commodities and management styles.

Marathon County Farm Bureau is a division of Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation. We work side by side with our Local, State and Nationwide members. We strive to be a voice for agriculture and Our Mission, "Empowering the Wisconsin agricultural community through our grassroots membership to preserve and promote the advancement of agriculture."

Furthermore, high speed internet access is necessary for our children to have equal access to educational resources, employment opportunities, and for us to remain connected to friends and family. For these reasons, it is critical that Marathon County receives increased broadband service.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715.348.0677 or at mueller675@yahoo.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

**William Mueller
Marathon County President
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation**



March 11, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless Project

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing on behalf of the Marathon Planning Metropolitan Planning Commission to express our support for the proposed Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless broadband expansion project in the Village of Kronenwetter and the Town of Guenther. Our organization represents 13 local units of government in the greater Wausau area and understands that there are many benefits of having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in our community related to quality of life and economic vitality. While the list of benefits is quite lengthy, I've highlighted a few key reasons why this expanded access is critical to suburban and rural areas of Marathon County currently unserved or underserved below.

First, the health of the community can be greatly increased with improved internet service. Through the internet, patients can have greater access to their health information and increased convenience in gaining prescriptions and supplies that they need. Additionally, telehealth is becoming a method of gaining healthcare and is a fantastic resource where traveling to appointments may be difficult. However, telehealth requires significant bandwidth, low latency, and symmetrical download and upload speeds.

Second, quality internet service can also have widespread impacts on our educational system. Reliable broadband makes it possible for students to attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home - something many students in Marathon County cannot currently do. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of accessing reliable internet service, which can take a great deal of time, money, and health exposure. Beyond virtual learning and homework, students with quality residential internet service would be able to access information and learn about their community and the world, secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

Third, as we continue to experience an ongoing workforce shortage, businesses have put a high emphasis on worker retention and development. Quality internet service provides existing employees with the ability to work remotely and access quality professional development opportunities. As we fill positions, we find that individuals are often drawn to the scenic beauty and rural setting of Marathon County. Unfortunately, we lose talent as prospective employees find that housing options are limited to where high speed internet infrastructure is located.

Finally, access to adequate broadband service is critical in our efforts to keep the public engaged and informed of what is taking place in local government. It provides them an opportunity to access meeting agendas, minutes and watch many of the meetings that are live streamed on our web sites.

The Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless project is an opportunity for some of the suburban and rural areas of Marathon County to have access to high quality, reliable internet service. As you've read above, the impact is extensive, touching nearly every industry in Marathon County in some manner. With this project, residents would have access to tele-health services, students can attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home, businesses can provide their employees with the added flexibility of working remotely, and the list continues.

Wausau Area Metropolitan Planning Organization supports this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715 212-2227 or at john.robinson@co.marathon.wi.us. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Robinson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Robinson
Chairperson
Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Organization

cc Dave Mack, MPO Director



Main Office • 2327 W Veterans Pkwy • PO Box 988 • Marshfield, WI 54449-0988
Regional Office • 70 South State St • Hixton, WI 54635

800-236-1041 • FAX 715-687-4126

March 8, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel, Frontier, Cirrinity Broadband Project

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Marathon County/Broadband Project. Agriculture's success and growth is dependent on reliable and affordable high speed internet service, as it allows farmers to follow commodity markets, communicate with customers and reach markets across the world. Additionally, precision agriculture, which can help reduce costs and increase efficiencies relies on the availability of broadband service and agricultural tourism, a growing market, relies on a strong digital presence.

ProVision Partners Cooperative of Wisconsin is an ag supply cooperative of feed/grain, agronomy, and energy products. We employ around 350 people. A good deal of our employees and patrons live and do business in rural areas of Wisconsin where local internet is a challenge.

Having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in rural areas of Marathon County is directly related to business vitality.

As a company we have been fortunate to have access for most of our locations. However, we are limited on using necessary technology in the field with poor rural broadband. In addition, with the pandemic forcing some of our employees to be able to work remotely has been a challenge with extremely slow down and upload speeds. Virtual meetings and training are difficult and often not even possible. Our farmers that we serve also are facing these challenges with internet speeds which limits them from using a lot of today's technologies to advance their operations.

As our business who looks to recruit new employees to service rural areas, residential broadband service is an essential quality of life issue for retention and relocation. Without this vital piece of infrastructure, we will lose qualified young employees to other regions or other states.

If this project can bring better rural broadband to under served areas we will be able to offer more flexible working arrangements, offer new technologies to our agriculture customers, and our employees can use vital technology to better and more efficiently do their jobs.

Furthermore, high speed internet access is necessary for our children to have equal access to educational resources, employment opportunities, and for us to remain connected to friends and family. For these reasons, it is critical that Marathon County receives increased broadband service.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 800-236-1041 or at rlarson@provisionpartners.coop. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Larson".

Rob Larson
General Manager/CEO

Auburndale • Black River Falls • Chili • Colby • Fairchild • Hixton • Humbird
Marshfield • Merrillan • Northfield • Pittsville • Stratford • Unity • Warrens • West Salem

Provisionpartners.coop



MARATHON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

500 FOREST STREET WAUSAU, WI 54403-5568

SCOTT R. PARKS
SHERIFF

NON-EMERGENCY
(715) 261-1200
FAX (715) 261-1221
www.marathoncountysheriff.org

March 8, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Dear Ms. Kristy Nieto,

This letter is in support of the Broadband Infrastructure Application submitted by Marathon County.

The Marathon County Sheriff's Office is committed to the persons living, working and visiting Marathon County through public safety management, trust building and assisting all levels of government maintaining this community. Technology is a major component of conducting this mission effectively. If individuals cannot connect with us, everyone loses and the trust established diminishes with each negative effort at interaction.

Technology has become a means of life no matter the age group of those we serve. Granted some are more familiar with technology than others within our County. Knowing more youthful individuals depend on using technology to connect rather than the more traditional means of telephoning, we have improved access to our 911 Center by upgrading our systems to accept text messages and shared photographs. This has worked well for us where there is solid connectivity, but there are many areas of our County especially in the more rural areas where connectivity access is minimal to poor to non-existent. This needs to change for the benefit of all.

Our local emergency responders in law enforcement, fire and EMS experience the same lack of connectivity. Many times our law enforcement professionals have to seek identified hot spots, sometimes needing to leave their assigned patrol areas, to gain access back to our Office to submit intelligence, reports and other data. This results in frequent visits to regular locations providing a developed pattern which could cause individuals with criminal intent to target the professionals using those identified hot spots. Broader access does not necessarily eliminate this problem but it does assist in lessening it.

I am requesting you consider and award this grant to Marathon County. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at 715-261-1205 and/or my direct email scott.parks@co.marathon.wi.us.

Sincerely,


Scott R. Parks
Marathon County Sheriff

March 7, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Letter of Support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel Project

Ms. Nieto,

I am writing in support of the proposed Marathon County/Bug Tussel project.

There are many benefits of having fast, reliable, and affordable internet service in our community related to quality of life and economic vitality. While the list of benefits is quite lengthy, I've highlighted a few key reasons why this expanded access is critical to the rural areas of Marathon County below.

First, the health of the community can be greatly increased with improved internet service. Through the internet, patients can have greater access to their health information and increased convenience in gaining prescriptions and supplies that they need. Additionally, telehealth is becoming a method of gaining healthcare and is a fantastic resource where traveling to appointments may be difficult. However, telehealth requires significant bandwidth, low latency, and symmetrical download and upload speeds.

Second, quality internet service can also have widespread impacts on our educational system. Reliable broadband makes it possible for students to attend virtual classes and



United Way
of Marathon County

complete assignments at home - something many students in Marathon County cannot currently do. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of accessing reliable internet service, which can take a great deal of time, money, and health exposure. Beyond virtual learning and homework, students with quality residential internet service would be able to access information and learn about their community and the world, secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

Third, as we continue to experience an ongoing workforce shortage, businesses have put a high emphasis on worker retention and development. Quality internet service provides existing employees with the ability to work remotely and access quality professional development opportunities. As we fill positions, we find that individuals are often drawn to the scenic beauty and rural setting of Marathon County. Unfortunately, we lose talent as prospective employees find that housing options are limited to where high speed internet infrastructure is located.

The Marathon County/Bug Tussel project is a unique opportunity for some of the more rural areas of Marathon County to have access to high quality, reliable internet service. As you've read above, the impact is extensive, touching nearly every industry in Marathon County in some manner. With this project, residents would have access to tele-health services, students can attend virtual classes and complete assignments at home, businesses can provide their employees with the added flexibility of working remotely, and the list continues.

As the executive director of United Way of Marathon County I fully support this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to reach me at (715) 298-5701 or at jsargent@unitedwaymc.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Sargent".

Jeff Sargent, Executive Director/CEO



WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

Longfellow Administration Center

415 Seymour Street • P.O. Box 359 • Wausau, Wisconsin 54402-0359 • 715-261-0500 • www.wausauschools.org

Dr. Keith W. Hilts, Superintendent of Schools

March 7, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto
Division Administrator
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless

Dear Public Service Commission of Wisconsin,

The Wausau School District would like to formally announce its support for the "Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless" project to increase District students' ability to access educational resources, learn successfully remotely, and support the general improvement of the community through increased broadband capacity.

All levels of our educational system stand to gain from this project as broadband can overcome geographical and financial barriers to provide a wide range of educational and cultural opportunities. For residential internet service, broadband makes it possible for students to attend their virtual classes and complete assignments at home – something that many students cannot currently do, even more so with the current COVID-19 pandemic. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of internet provision, including traveling to the public library, a local McDonalds, or friends house which can take a great deal of time and money. Beyond virtual learning and homework, with quality residential internet service, students can easily access information and learn about their community and the world. They can also learn about secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

The Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless Project provides a unique opportunity for households in rural Marathon County to access reliable, high quality, fiber broadband service. With this project, District students would have access to consistent high speed internet service that would enable them to easily participate in synchronous education, attend large webinars, even when siblings and other household members are also accessing the internet.

As the Wausau School District, we fully support this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the District at (715) 261-0505.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dr. Keith Hilts
Superintendent of Schools

It is the mission of the Wausau School District to advance student learning, achievement, and success.



WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

Longfellow Administration Center

5 Seymour Street • P.O. Box 359 • Wausau, WI 54402-0359 • 715-261-0500 • Fax 715-261-2503 • www.wausauschools.org

Dr. Keith Hiltz, Superintendent of Schools

March 10, 2022

Ms. Kristy Nieto

Division Administrator

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

4822 Madison Yards Way

P.O. Box 7854

Madison, WI 53705-9100

Subject: Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless Project

Dear Public Service Commission of Wisconsin,

The Wausau School District would like to formally announce its support for the Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless project to increase District students' ability to access educational resources, learn successfully remotely, and support the general improvement of the community through increased broadband capacity.

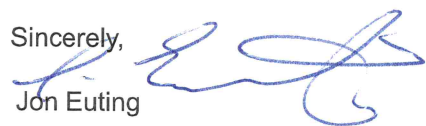
All levels of our educational system stand to gain from this project as broadband can overcome geographical and financial barriers to provide a wide range of educational and cultural opportunities. For residential internet service, broadband makes it possible for students to attend their virtual classes and complete assignments at home – something that many students cannot currently do, even more so with the current COVID-19 pandemic. Being unable to attend online classes and complete assignments at home creates a burden on students as they must find other means of internet provision, including traveling to the public library, a local McDonalds, or friends house which can take a great deal of time and money. Beyond virtual learning and homework, with quality residential internet service, students can easily access information and learn about their community and the world. They can also learn about secondary education options, research job opportunities, and communicate with others.

The Marathon County/Bug Tussel Wireless Project provides a unique opportunity for households in rural Marathon County to access reliable, high quality, fiber broadband service. With this project, District students would have access to consistent high speed internet service that would enable them to easily participate in synchronous education, attend large webinars, even when siblings and other household members are also accessing the internet.

As the Wausau School District, we fully support this grant application and will fully assist in the completion of the project goal. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact the District at Jon Euting, Director of Technology and Media Services at jeuting@wausauschools.org.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,



Jon Euting

Director of Technology
Wausau School District

It is the mission of the Wausau School District to advance student learning, achievement, and success.